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when so many compilers "give out" in the early letters of the alphabet, the author deserves especial praise. His volumes will merit a constant place by the side of the dictionary and the gazetteer in every reference library. It would be especially desirable that an edition on a little thinner paper, at least at a somewhat lower price, could be offered for the use of schools. Such volumes as these are invaluable in every class in history, and would doubtless be widely introduced.

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- 2.—*The Life of Charles Dickens.* BY JOHN FORSTER. Vol. I. 1812–1842. London: Chapman and Hall. 1872. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co.

THERE is no better reading for an idle hour than a volume of memoirs or a good biography, and we presume that by this time everybody who could buy, borrow, or take out the book has read through the first volume of the "*Life of Dickens*," by his friend, John Forster, who has made biography in some sort his line in literature. It is safe to say everybody, because no author of his generation so attracted all classes of readers as Dickens. The characters he sent out into the world between 1837 and his visit to America in 1842 were so new, vivid, and amusing, that they became actual existences to thousands. And although the fate common to all has overtaken many of them, and Kenwigses, Bumbles, Smikes, and the rest of that kind have vanished or are perceptibly vanishing into the covers of the books they sprang from, most of us remember the spell they laid upon us, and many are under it still.

There were few external incidents in Dickens's life, apart from his wonderful literary successes, and those recorded in this volume were known already, except the episode of the blacking warehouse. But some extracts from letters written to Forster during Dickens's first visit to this country are new and entertaining. He had let the world see in his "Notes" that the progress in the United States which began with effusive affection on the part of the nation and the "nation's guest" ended in something like disgust, — what with his ill-timed copyright speeches and the irritation produced in him by American habits, manners, and intrusiveness. Our national trait of looking upon a distinguished man as in some sort public property, as we do upon a public house or a public conveyance, which we have a right to make use of when it suits our pleasure, was never more strongly exemplified than in his case. In these letters he pours out his feelings fresh and warm from the heart. His language is strong, but he means every word he

writes: how he was mobbed at all hours, and hand-shaken and stared at and spit upon; how he was wearied to death by literary ladies, the L. L.'s, as he calls them; how he hates our "eternal prosy conversation about dollars and politics, the only two subjects they ever converse upon or can converse upon"; and how he "would not live here on any consideration": better fifty years of London than a cycle of Broadway. It is amusing to read how entirely he agreed with Mr. Carlyle in his estimate of our talent for social intercourse: "I am quite serious when I say that I do not believe there are on the whole earth besides so many intensified bores as in these United States. No one can form an adequate idea of the real meaning of the word without coming here." Another melancholy instance of a foreigner who did not understand our institutions!

On the whole, Mr. Forster has done his work fairly well, apart from some faults of taste and of style; but we have laid down the book with a certain sense of disappointment. We are shown Dickens at school, in the reporters' gallery, and, later, working at his stories with an industry as intense as his imagination. We are told he was "the cheerfullest man of the age"; that "light and motion flashed from every part of his face"; that he was the life of society by his quaint fancies, his unwearying animal spirits, and his love of jollity and fun; that a man "of more beautiful and noble nature and more truly generous never lived." We hear of walks, rides, journeyings, and dinners public and private; but somehow we do not get a clear, distinct idea of the man. We see his features dimly through a haze. We feel that we do not fully know his character or even his habits. Mr. Forster has not the knack of catching a likeness, at least in this volume he has not shown the masterly hand that with a few skilful touches places the man before us, standing "revealed" for once and always.

Mr. Forster's style seems to us to lack directness and simplicity. There is an affectation in his manner that reminds us of some ambitious writers nearer home, who, as his former hero, Goldsmith, says, "hunt after lofty expressions to deliver ordinary ideas, and are forever gaping when they have only a whisper to bring out." Many of his sentences are as involved in their construction as if they were translated from the Latin; they seem to be turned upside down, and it requires a second perusal to understand them. Here is one, for example, and there are plenty of others like it, that jars upon the nerves of a judicious reader: "To the account therein given of himself when he went to the school, as advanced enough, so safely had his memory retained its poor fragments of early schooling, to be put into Virgil, as getting sundry prizes, and as attaining to the eminent position of its first boy, one of

his two schoolfellows with whom I have held communication, makes objection" (page 75). It is strange that with such living models as Mill, Huxley, Helps, or Maurice, whose vigorous classical English is as clear as the best French, any man in Great Britain who has anything to say cannot say it simply and naturally.

That to write a man's life generally makes the biographer in love with his subject is notorious; and Mr. Forster had, over and above this influence, the affection of three-and-twenty years' intimate friendship to warp his judgment. Even this twofold cause of aberration does not excuse the profuse unvarying praise he bestows upon his hero and all his works. Mr. Forster takes Dickens at his own valuation and gives us pretty much his ideal of himself. Heine says the original weakness of man is to appear what he is not. Dickens did not escape this taint of the old Adam. His emotions were so strong and his imagination so vivid, that his joys and sorrows, his wishes and hopes, seemed to him much more intense than they really were. A genius in whom "*Gedanke und Ausdruck*," thought and the expression of it, sprang up together, he was never at a loss for strong, highly colored, eloquent words. An actor by nature, "the best amateur that ever wielded a hare's foot or a blunt sword," he instinctively personified the character he dreamed of, and with his great power of language and his knack of making every point tell, he deceived many of his friends and very likely himself.

A good example of this peculiarity of Dickens's character, and of Mr. Forster's apparent inability to detect it, is the story of the blacking warehouse. If in the case of books patents were applied for instead of copyrights, Mr. Forster would claim this incident as his especial discovery, — a discovery he made accidentally "one day in the March or April of 1847," Dickens being then thirty-five years of age. These are the unvarnished facts of the case: —

Dickens the father was in the Marshalsea Prison for debt; the rest of the family, nearly destitute, after "camping in two rooms" for a while, took up their lodgings in the prison. A relative engaged in the manufacture of an imitation of Warren's Blacking, knowing their circumstances, and seeing Charles, then about ten years old, neglected and idle, took him into his employ at a salary of six or seven shillings a week, with the hearty thanks of his parents. The boy remained in it until his father was released from prison; he was then taken away, against his mother's wishes, and sent to school.

Dickens, alluding to this period of his life, says: "I have no idea how long it lasted, whether for a year or much more or less." Probably for less. His memory was as retentive as his faculty of observa-

tion was minute. It is not likely that a child who could describe things he saw before he was two years of age could forget the time he had passed in this "acute misery," — a time, Mr. Forster writes, "of which he could never lose the remembrance while he remembered anything, and the recollection of which at intervals haunted him and made him miserable even to that hour." His business was to tie the corks of the blacking-bottles and to paste on the labels, — an occupation not uncongenial to youthful tastes; and "on Saturday night it was a grand thing to walk home with six shillings in his pocket, and to look in at the shop windows and think what it would buy." In the beginning he was placed by himself on an upper floor, but he soon found his way down to Bob Fagin and Paul Green, two boys who were busy at the same work below stairs. Although youngsters of ten or eleven are not generally over-particular about their playmates, if they are not bullied by them, Dickens's recollection was, that "no words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship, the shame I felt in my position." Harshness and physical ill-treatment do certainly leave a scar on the character of a child, but there are no complaints of anything of the kind. On the contrary, his cousin arranged to teach him during the dinner hour. He was treated as upon a different footing from the rest. The boys and men employed always spoke of him as the young gentleman. He remembered that "though perfectly familiar with them, my conduct and manners were different enough from theirs to place a space between us." Nothing very terrible about this, we should say, for a boy who had been "a poor little drudge ever since we came to London," and whose shiftless parents were in a jail. From this place he went at once to a school. Two of his schoolfellows have described him to Mr. Forster as he appeared to them then and there, — a healthy-looking, handsome, curly-headed lad, full of animation and animal spirits, fond of telling stories, of getting up plays, and connected with every mischievous prank in the school. It is evident that the iron had not entered very deeply into the soul of the boy.

But Dickens, the man, chose to consider the blacking warehouse the skeleton of his closet, although he took care to work every bone of it into his books. It grew larger and more ghastly in his imagination, until he felt a bitter sense of injury against fate and the parents who had sacrificed him. It was "wonderful to him that he could have been so easily cast away, that no one had compassion on him." He gradually identified himself with Oliver and Copperfield, just as when a child he "sustained his idea of Roderick Random for a month at a stretch." It became an awful secret that he carried locked up in his

heart, and when at last he confided it to Mr. Forster he exhausted his remarkable melodramatic power of language to express his feelings. His version of the story reads like an article in a London "Penny Dreadful." "How much I suffered it is utterly beyond my power to tell, no man's imagination can overstep the reality." "I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond." "My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and child, even that I am a man, and wander desolately back to that time of my life." "Until old Hungerford Market was pulled down, until old Hungerford stairs were destroyed and the very nature of the ground changed, I never had the courage to go back to the place where my servitude began. I never saw it. I could not endure to go near it. For many years, when I came near to Warren's in the Strand, I crossed over to the opposite side of the way, to avoid a certain smell of the cement they put upon the blacking corks which reminded me of what I was once!" "I have never, until I now impart it to this paper, in any burst of confidence with any one, my own wife not excepted, raised the curtain I then dropped, thank God!"

Mr. Forster tells us that he was "startled" when Dickens told him the story. Even now, after an interval of twenty-five years, he seems to accept this catalogue of emotions, and adds a few sympathetic touches of his own about "the poor little lad," who was turned at the age of ten into "a laboring hind," and who "mingled his tears with the water" in which he rinsed and washed out bottles.

If the dispassionate reader applies the moral spectroscope to this story, the lines of exaggeration become strongly visible, — an exaggeration curious and characteristic of the man. It is likely that the lad of ten knew nothing of this agony and humiliation, and enjoyed his independence, his companions, and his six shillings; but there is no doubt that Dickens, famous, flattered, with dinner invitations innumerable from the highest quarters, the intimate associate of all the best men in letters and in art, did feel humiliated when he recollected that he had "worked from morning to night with common men and boys, a shabby child," and in a blacking shop at that! May not there have been the rub? Was not the stigma of having belonged to the workingmen class, the root of the horrors inexpressible, unutterable, except to his dearest friend? The dislike of a low origin, or any lapse from what is called respectability, is probably stronger in an Englishman than in any other man. Be he ever so clever or so radical, he can hardly

escape it. Dickens considered himself the son of a gentleman; he was aristocratic in his feelings, and had great personal pride. It may be that blacking had the same effect upon his nerves as bodkin upon those of Sir Piercie Shafton. Most people will think that in this matter Dickens was unnecessarily severe upon his parents. His father was at his wits' end, in prison, and nothing "turned up." If the poor man did little for his son, he at least bequeathed him Micawber, who will live the longest of his creations.

Mr. Forster's criticism of Dickens's works is the least satisfactory part of the book. It would have done no harm to the fame of his friend if the steady flow of indiscriminating praise had been rippled here and there by a difficulty or a doubt. He might at least have hinted that there were critics, wrong-minded and without taste of course, whose opinion of Dickens's works is not always so favorable as his own. Mistaken persons who think that Dickens, with all his genius, saw things on the surface and rarely got beneath it; and in the reforms he had at heart, was so much more influenced by his feelings than by his reason, that he narrowly escaped, if indeed he did escape, belonging to the *classe dangereuse* of sentimentalists who attack abuses with the least possible knowledge of the root of the evil, and curse when they come to bless. We have even heard of captious fault-finders who say that Dickens's villains are always villains, and his angels always angelic, without the mixture of good and evil we find in human beings; that there is no development of character in his stories, his personages springing full-grown and fully equipped from his brain with a speech in their mouths to suit the part; often mere caricatures who reappear when they are wanted, with the same features and the same superscription. And some indeed have gone wrong so far as to maintain that his humor is often overstrained, the *jeu d'esprit* becoming perceptibly an *effort d'esprit*, as a Frenchman once expressed it; that his pathos often wanders dangerously near to the edge of the abyss of falseness, not to say maudlin; and that his gushing benevolence, which makes all the virtuous poor happy, especially about Christmas-time, has a flavor of plum-pudding and mince-pie about it, and seems to result rather from a jolly good dinner and abundant port than from any fixed principle of charity. All these idle remarks he might have noticed to confute them. His method has been to exhaust praise and to make use of an additional padding of commonplaces, we might call them platitudes, of the Goody Two Shoes school of philosophy. It is appalling to learn that "we cannot too often be told, that as the pride and grandeur of external circumstance is the falsest of earthly things, so the truth of virtue in the heart is the most lovely and lasting, and

from the pages of 'Oliver Twist' this teaching is once again to be taken by all who will look for it there" (page 161). It was not as a writer of tracts or of moral essays that Mr. Dickens won his great reputation; and of the thousands who have read "Oliver Twist," probably no one has ever remarked before that "it is the book's pre-eminent merit that vice is nowhere made attractive in it." In the same vein Mr. Barnum criticised the moral dramas formerly played in his Museum, and made daily use of his criticism in the form of an advertisement; they were warranted not to bring a blush to the cheek of the purest-minded female. Mr. Forster may not have heard that soon after Dickens's death there was much discussion in this country among earnest-minded advocates of temperance as to whether an author so fond of the "wicked jingle of glass," and who so often and so enthusiastically chanted the praises of half-and-half, mulled wine, hot punch, and brandy cold without, was a moral writer or even a Christian.

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3. — *Livy, Books I. – X. With Introduction, Historical Examination, and Notes.* By J. R. SEELEY, M. A., Professor of Modern History, Cambridge. Book I. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 1871. 8vo. pp. 198.

THERE is certainly room for a good edition of *Livy* with English notes; for there exists none at present, except of certain portions, selected for the use of classes. There is, to be sure, Weissenborn's cheap and excellent edition, for those who can read German,—and the student of philology who cannot read German lacks one of the tools of his trade; but its crowded pages and painful minuteness of annotation weary both the mind and the eye of the English student. And even Weissenborn does not give us all that we want. His chief interest is with the grammar and language of *Livy*; and although he devotes a fair amount of space to explaining the facts told by his author, yet he can hardly be called an independent student in this field. He generally adopts intelligently, and not slavishly, the views of the prevailing school of antiquarians; what we may call the school of Niebuhr, represented especially by Schweigler and Becker. But these views are in a fair way to be superseded by the later doctrines advanced by Mommsen, which may be said to have fairly revolutionized a great part of our theories upon the early institutions of Rome.

Mr. Seeley has therefore undertaken a very useful enterprise; and even if he gives us no more than the first decade, we shall be grateful for that, and hope that some one else equally competent will continue